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FRUITFUL DEATH: MIRCEA ELIADE AND ERNST JÜNGER ON HUMAN SACRIFICE, 1937–1945

CRISTIANO GROTTANELLI

Summary

Mircea Eliade, the writer and historian of religions, and Ernst Jünger, the hero of the Great War, novelist, and essayist, met in the 1950s and co-edited twelve issues of the periodical *Antaios*. Before they met and cooperated, however, and while the German writer knew about Eliade from their common friend, Carl Schmitt, they both dealt with the subject of human sacrifice. Eliade began to do so in the thirties, and his interest in that theme was at least in part an aspect of his political activism on behalf of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Iron Guard, the nationalistic and anti-Semitic movement lead by Corneliu Codreanu. Sacrificial ideology was a central aspect of the Legion's political theories, as well as of the practice of its members. After the Iron Guard was outlawed by its allies, and many of its members had been killed, and while the Romanian regime of Marshal Ion Antonescu was still fighting alongside the National Socialist regime in the Second World War, Eliade turned to other aspects of sacrificial ideology. In 1939 he wrote the play *Iphigenia*, celebrating Agamemnon's daughter as a willing victim whose death made the Greek conquest of Troy possible; and as a member of the regime's diplomatic service in Lisbon he published a book in Portuguese on Romanian virtues (1943), in which he presented what he called *Two Myths of Romanian Spirituality*, extolling his nation's readiness to die through the description of the sacrificial traditions of *Master Manole* and of the Ewe Lamb (*Mioritza*). Jünger's attitude to sacrifice ran along lines that were less traditional: possibly already while serving as a *Wehrmacht* officer, in his pamphlet *Der Friede*, the German writer attributed sacrificial status to all the victims of the Second World War, soldiers, workmen, and unknowing innocents, and saw their death as the ransom of a peace "without victory or defeat." In this article, the sacrificial ideologies of the two intellectuals are compared in order to reflect upon the complex interplay between traditional religious themes, more or less freely re-interpreted and transformed, political power, and violent conflict, in an age of warfare marked by fascisms and by the terrible massacre some refer to by the name of an ancient Greek sacrificial practice.

Welches soll nun das Heilswort unserer Betrachtung sein?
Es lautet: Der Krieg muss für alle Frucht bringen.

Ernst Jünger, *Der Friede*

1. *Eliade, Jünger, and Human Sacrifice*

Before they met and cooperated, and during the Second World War, while they were fighting, or working, on the same side, Mircea Eliade and Ernst Jünger both wrote on the theme “religion and violence” and on a specific aspect of that theme that seems to be its most typical expression: human sacrifice. For the Romanian intellectual, the subject was a central one already during the thirties, as he became a very active sympathizer of the violently nationalistic and anti-Semitic Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Iron Guard, and it remained central for him throughout the war and later. For Jünger, it emerged during the forties, as a specific version of the theme of death in battle that had been the *Leitmotiv* of his first books and essays since his experiences in the Foreign Legion (1912) and in the Great War of 1914–1918. In the present article, I shall present the respective positions of Eliade and Jünger on the subject; then I shall compare these positions, and I shall reflect on their meaning in the general context of the World War and of its massacres. In particular, I shall show how both positions are connected to a subject that has rightly given rise to an ocean of discussion: the massacre of the European Jews by the National Socialist regime. In the light of the treatment of the sacrificial theme by these two authors, it is perhaps possible to contribute with a few modest reflections to a better meditation on that immense and terrible event, which was, and still is, often interpreted as a sacrifice, or at least as sacred, precisely because it was *tremendum*.

2. *Mircea Eliade's Play Iphigenia (1939–1941)*

In 1937, Mircea Eliade dedicated no less than three articles to the two Iron Guard martyrs, Ion Motza and Vasile Marin, killed in Spain where they had joined the troops fighting for Francisco Franco, and

solemnly buried in Romania on February 11, 1937.¹ In the dramatic article published in *Vremea*, the magazine of the extreme right, openly favourable to the Iron Guard, on January 24, 1937, Eliade stated that Ion Motza's death was full of profound meaning. It was, he wrote, "a sacrifice destined to bear fruit, to strengthen Christianity, to energize the youth," because Motza "was impatient to sacrifice himself, to teach his generation a way of life made up of heroism and self-denial."² According to his biographer, Florin Turcanu,³ it was Motza's death, and not the assassination of "the Captain" Corneliu Codreanu, the leader of the Legion of the Archangel Michael killed by the Romanian police in the night between November 29 and November 30, 1938, of which Eliade thought as he wrote *Iphigenia*, his first and most controversial play, in the late autumn⁴ of 1939.

In the second volume of his autobiography, *Les moissons du solstice*, Eliade mentions the play:

At the end of the fall of 1939, I wrote my first play, *Iphigenia*, and I submitted it to the reading committee of the National Theatre, who accepted it. But I never saw it on stage. It was played at the beginning of 1941, and, in spite of the excellent staging and publicity, was unsuccessful. I was told that the play lacked "dramatic nerve," and this was probably true. If *Iphigenia* has some merit, it is of a different kind.⁵

Turcanu tells us it took Eliade only four days to write the play, as the author himself once stated.⁶ According to Eliade's biographer, this

¹ Florin Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade: Le prisonnier de l'histoire*, Paris: La Découverte 2003, 266–67. Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco: L'oubli du fascisme*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2002, 186–88. It seems obvious that the precise date on which Eliade wrote the play points to, or denies, the connection between *Iphigenia* and Codreanu's death.

² See Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 267.

³ Ibid. 298.

⁴ Or, according to Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 197, in the month of December. It seems obvious that the precise date on which Eliade wrote the play points to, or disproves, a connection between *Iphigenia* and Codreanu's death.

⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Mémoire II (1937–1960): Les moissons du solstice*, Paris: Gallimard 1988, 58.

⁶ Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 298, quoting Eliade's correspondence: *Europa, Asia, America*, vol. I, Bucharest: Humanitas 1999, 198.

is a sign of the feverish state of mind of the Romanian intellectual, expressed also by the forebodings of death that fill the text, and by the way in which Iphigenia, the young daughter of king Agamemnon, ecstatically accepts to become the victim of the human sacrifice that shall allow the Achaean fleet to sail towards Troy. Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine points out that Eliade had been arrested on July 14, 1938, because of his political activities in favour of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, after that organization was suppressed by king Carol II, and that he finally returned home on November 12 of that year, after having spent four months in a concentration camp.⁷ As a consequence of this, Eliade was forbidden from April 1938 to April 1940 to teach at the University of Bucharest, where he had been the assistant of Professor Nae Ionescu. Ionescu, who had also been arrested during the winter of 1938 as an influential sympathizer of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, was detained in the same camp until the autumn of 1939, after which he returned to his villa in Baneasa on the outskirts of Bucharest, where he died of a heart attack on March 15, 1940.

Iphigenia is described by Laignel-Lavastine as a text produced by Eliade in a period during which it was impossible for him to speak out clearly, as he had before he was arrested, and to express his sympathy for the Iron Guard. This is why he used a more metaphoric discourse (*un langage crypté, plus métaphorique*), as in *Iphigenia*. “In this three-act play,” she explains,

one finds all the ideological themes that were dear to him — above all the glorification of sacrifice and of patriotic death — aptly woven together in a theatrical text that had *a priori* no direct connection with the European and Romanian present. Many passages repeat, almost word for word, the contents of the articles Eliade had dedicated in 1937 to the “sacrifice” of Ion Motza and Vasile Marin.⁸

To these statements, Laignel-Lavastine adds further data and observations. The play, she writes, was reprinted in 1951 by a publishing house run by Romanian refugees in Argentina, and the new edition,

⁷ Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 185–201.

⁸ Ibid. 197–98.

containing a previously unpublished preface by Eliade, dated August 1951, was dedicated to two friends: Haig Acterian, who campaigned for the Iron Guard together with Eliade during the Romanian political elections in December 1937, and Mihail Sebastian, Eliade's Jewish friend, whose diary, published in Romanian in 1996 and in French in 1998, contains information both on the pogroms of the Iron Guard (January 1941) and on Eliade's conversion to the ideology of the Legion (especially in 1937, and specifically in connection with the deaths of Motza and Marin).⁹

Though *Iphigenia* was reviewed by many, it is to Mihail Sebastian's diary that one should turn to find a correct evaluation of the play: Sebastian had read it in 1940, and, though he did not go to the opening performance (February 10, 1941), which took place two weeks after a pogrom enacted by the Legion, he did go to see it at the Bucharest National Theatre at the beginning of March. In the entry dated March 6, 1941, his reaction was not too negative; indeed, he thought the text was better than he had found it when he had read it, but he noted that the actors were loud, pompous and vulgar. For the sake of my argument in the present article, Sebastian's reasons for not going to the *première* are more important than his actual opinion of the play as a text. The opening performance would surely be, he wrote on February 12, like

the meeting of a *cuib* (that is to say, of a Iron Guard cell, the smallest organized group of members of that political organization). Nina (Eliade's wife), with whom I spoke on the telephone, told me it was a great success. Unknowingly, she confirmed my suspicions. Though the text is full of allusions and of implied meanings, it is hard to prohibit an *Iphigenia*. In spite of this, I find the symbolism gross. The play could have been called *Iphigenia, or, The Iron Guard Sacrifice*, with the addition of a good sub-title. After five months of Iron Guard government and three days of Iron Guard rebellion (i.e., of internecine fight between the Legion and its allies in the extreme right-wing coalition government then ruling Romania), after so many murders and fires and so much sacking, one can say that in any case that first night came just at the right time.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid. 188–208.

¹⁰ Ibid. 198. Both Laignel-Lavastine and Turcanu convey to their readers that these

3. *The Iron Guard and Human Sacrifice, 1933–1945*

Thus, in *Iphigenia* human sacrifice had a double meaning. First of all, it had the general meaning that human sacrifice takes on in the context of modern war: the willingness of the victims to give up their lives for what the ruling classes have successfully presented to them as the safety, or the greatness, of their fatherland. In addition to this more obvious meaning of the concept, however, another one could, in the Romanian context of 1939–1941, be found in Eliade's play, derived from the more specific Iron Guard ideology of death and sacrifice. When Sebastian stated in his diary that "it was hard to prohibit *Iphigenia*," he was referring to the first and more generic meaning, which made the play "patriotic" in the opinion of the Romanian government, and thus, according to that government, not only acceptable but commendable in that precise context, when the attention was upon a war fought on the side of the Fascist-National Socialist "Axis." But what he saw in it already when reading the text, and what he expected to recognize more vividly still during the first performance he avoided going to, was the second, implied meaning, which turned the occasion into "a *cuib* meeting" dedicated to the celebration of *Iphigenia*, or, *The Iron Guard Sacrifice*: the sacrificial discourse of the Iron Guard. On this discourse, so important both for understanding

lines in Sebastian's diary was left out when it was translated into French: see Mihail Sebastian, *Journal (1935–1944)*, traduit du roumain par Alain Paruit, Paris: Stock 1998, 288, while they may be found in the Romanian edition: Mihail Sebastian, *Jurnal 1935–1944*, Bucharest: Humanitas 1996, 305. The reasons for this and other blatant "transformations" of Sebastian's text in the French edition are not clear to me; but surely Laignel-Lavastine's explanation on is not convincing. Referring to other missing lines in the French edition, she writes: "Pour des raisons techniques, et non pas idéologiques, ces lignes ne figurent pas dans l'édition française (Stock, 1998), pour laquelle il a fallu couper environs 20% du texte intégral" (*Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 189, n. 1). As for the reasons why, during a war, "it is hard to prohibit an *Iphigenia*," see below, and compare with my *Il sacrificio*, Roma and Bari: Laterza 1999, 3–7, and with the French case of the "National Rites of Sacrifice" discussed by Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 2002.

the Iron Guard's ideology — similar to that of other Fascist organizations, but at the same time very specific¹¹ — and for reconstructing Eliade's peculiar *Weltanschauung* during the 1930s, I shall present a series of observations.

In particular, in order to understand the sacrificial ideology of the Iron Guard, one should begin by dealing with two symmetrically opposed interpretations of the discourses and practices in question, advanced respectively by Mircea Eliade in the second volume of his *Mémoire* (1980),¹² and by Furio Jesi in his book *Cultura di destra* (1979),¹³ the first important contribution on the connection between Eliade's theories and the ideas and behaviours of the Legion. The two interpretations are opposed in various ways; but the simplest, and probably the most correct, explanation of this opposition may be found in the respective attitudes of their authors: a blandly positive attitude, and an attempt to present his own past in an acceptable way, in the case of Eliade; and a fiercely hostile stance in the case of Jesi, who was an Italian left-wing intellectual of Jewish descent.

In order to deal convincingly with the two interpretations, and thus to tackle our problem convincingly, it is important to keep in mind that the Iron Guard ideology of death and sacrifice was enacted most emphatically on February 11, 1937, during the dramatic funeral of the martyrs Motza and Marin. The bodies of the two heroes were brought back to Romania from Spain in a train that crossed Germany and Poland, and upon their arrival in Bucharest they were placed in an railway carriage that travelled throughout the country. At each halt, crowds gathered and were made to swear that they were ready to sacrifice their lives to avenge them. In 1933, Codreanu wrote that "the members of the Legion love death, because their blood shall

¹¹ On the Iron Guard, one can still rely on the monograph by Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs 1990.

¹² Eliade, *Mémoire II*, 31–35, 59–68.

¹³ Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra*, Milano: Garzanti 1979, 11–66 (ch. I, *Cultura di destra e religione della morte*).

cement Legionary Romania”;¹⁴ this was echoed most precisely by Radu Gyr’s *Hymn of the Legionary Youth* (“We shall erect a thousand eternal iconostases,/ in the sun;/ we shall build them with rock, fire and sea,/ and cement them with Dacian blood”), while three years later an Iron Guard anthem, the *Hymn to the Heroes Motza and Marin*, put things somewhat differently by proclaiming that “to the Dacian people the bones (of the two martyrs)/ shall ever be a foundation;/ as blockheads cemented by the century,/ they shall defy eternity.”¹⁵ Eliade himself describes this fundamental, religious aspect of the Iron Guard ideology, in the second volume of his *Mémoires*:

In 1937–1938, death was the most popular theme among Legionaries, and the death of Motza and Marin was the exemplary model. Motza’s statement, “your own ashes are the most powerful dynamite” had become the new Gospel. Masses, obituaries, fasts, and prayers made up a large part of “Legionary activities.”¹⁶

The most striking aspect, however, of Eliade’s description of the Iron Guard’s theme of death and sacrifice in his late writings, is the introduction of an element of non-violence into Codreanu’s theory and practice. Commenting upon the capture of the Captain, which led to his death in November 1938, he wrote:

By way of many messages, (Codreanu) had assured the Minister of the Interior, Armand Calinescu, that the members of the Iron Guard would not react, not even if they were dragged by their feed and tortured. He had ordered his men not only to refrain from violence, but even to forego any form of passive resistance, and had actually decided to dissolve his party, *All for the Fatherland* (the name chosen by the Legion for the 1937 elections). Calinescu’s tactics had worked: all the members of the Iron Guard had let themselves be arrested, they were now in jail and waited, like rats, to be burned alive. No doubt Codreanu died, like many other Iron Guard members, believing that his sacrifice would hasten the Movement’s victory.¹⁷

¹⁴ Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 186–87 (Motza’s “funeral”), and 116 (Codreanu’s statement).

¹⁵ For the songs and anthems of the Iron Guard, I rely on an Italian translation: *Guardia di Ferro: Al passo con l’Arcangelo. Ritmi legionari*, Parma: Edizioni all’insegna del Veltro 1982. For the two hymns quoted here, see 101–2 and 106–8.

¹⁶ *Mémoire II*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 36.

On the same page from which the quotation is taken, Eliade connects Codreanu's attitude with the leader's preoccupation with "the salvation of souls" rather than with "political victory," and contrasts the Captain's attitude to that of Mihail Polihroniade, a member of the Legion who, even though he was no less brave than Codreanu, gave the right importance to victory, and, after his leader's death, criticized his behaviour as being the consequence of too many "masses and obituaries." Almost a year after the Captain's death, Eliade adds, Polihroniade was executed:

(Though he did not put his trust in masses and obituaries,) he died no less serenely than those who believed. He asked for a cigarette, lighted it and smiled as he walked to the wall where the machine-guns awaited him.¹⁸

On p. 61 of *Les moissons du solstice*, the behaviour of the Iron Guard centred upon heroic self-surrender is described as a general rule, and not just as the choice of a given moment, culminating in the capture of Codreanu. In that passage, the murder of the right-wing intellectual Nicolae Iorga by Legionary activists is presented as follows:

We were horrified to learn of the assassination of N. Iorga and of V. Magdearu, as well as that of a group of prisoners in the Bucharest prison. In committing their crimes in the night of November 29, 1940, the Iron Guard commandos thought they were avenging Codreanu. But in reality they were annihilating the religious, "sacrificial" value of the execution of members of the Legion under Carol II, and compromising the Iron Guard so irreparably that from then on it was considered a pro-Nazi and terrorist organization.¹⁹

In describing the sacrificial ideal of the Iron Guard as a passive, almost pacifist attitude, and in accusing the murderers of Iorga and Magdearu of *betraying* that ideal, Eliade appeared to misunderstand the very nature of that religious and political ideology, consisting of a *combination* of Orthodox Christian *self-sacrifice* — modelled upon the redeeming death of the Saviour and upon the archaic, pre-Christian

¹⁸ Ibid. 35–36.

¹⁹ Ibid. 61

view of the fruitful death of willing victims — and the *warlike behaviour* of members of a military elite, the Guard or Legion headed by Codreanu, ever ready to strike Romania's enemies to death. Thus, sacrifice (of course, the sacrifice of members of the Legion) was inextricably blended with revenge, as was already the case in the solemn oaths pledged by the crowds mourning for the heroes of 1937,²⁰ and, towards the other end of the chronological spectrum, with the assassination of Armand Calinescu in September 1939, accomplished as a retaliation for the Captain's death. From the very beginning of the Legion's history it killed for revenge, as on December 30, 1933, when Prime Minister Ion G. Duca, a member of the Liberal Party, was assassinated by three members of the Legion who wanted to punish him for his "persecution" of their organization. A fundamental, symmetrical aspect of this ideology of revenge was the readiness of the Iron Guard members to accept the consequences of their violence, completing a system composed of vengeful violence, sacrificial expiation, and further vengeance. This is well expressed by the following statement, attributed to Codreanu:

In theory, Legionary violence is justified only if followed by expiation: many Legionary activists gave themselves up (to the police) after committing a crime, even if they could easily have escaped — and some ended by giving themselves up even when they had actually started to escape.²¹

So much for Eliade's position expressed in *Les moissons du solstice*. As for Jesi, on the basis of a theory that has been presented many times in dealing with the National Socialist massacre of European Jews, and is most recently exemplified by Michael Ley's position in his book *Holocaust als Menschenopfer*, he suggested in 1979 that, within the sacrificial ideology of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, the Jews were the intended victims.²² To deal with this hypothetical

²⁰ See above, and Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 266–67.

²¹ Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 116–20.

²² Jesi, *Cultura di destra*. On the massacre of Jews in Romania, see Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of the Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime (1940–1944)*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee 2000 — but the subject is

interpretation, one should begin by stating that the Iron Guard pogroms, not intended as sacrificial rituals, and usually not ending in the self-denunciation of those who were responsible, were envisaged by the Legion as *revenge* against the Jews, who were seen as Jesus' murderers and as arch-enemies of the Nation. Indeed, I am convinced that, though it rarely referred explicitly to the traditional "ritual murder" accusations, the Legionary image of the Jews was based upon the ancient myth that presented them as killing Christian children by sucking their blood.²³ In his book *The Transfiguration of Romania*, published in Bucharest 1936 by the editing house of the pro-Legionary periodical *Vremea*, Emil Cioran, later a member of the Iron Guard and always a friend of Mircea Eliade, wrote that

treated in detail in Laignel-Lavastine's book. Jesi's position should be compared with that of Michael Ley, *Holokaust als Menschenopfer: Vom Christentum zur politischer Religion des Nationalsozialismus*, Münster, Hamburg, London: LIT Verlag 2002. Ley writes: "... in the National Socialist self-understanding, the murder of the European Jews is a sacred rite, enacted as a human sacrifice in the annihilation camps (*Vernichtungslagern*). This sacrifice was considered to be an expiation offering, and was identified with the intended re-creation of the World." It is easy to reply by stating that Hitler and his regime envisaged the Jews not as sacrificial victims, but as noxious beings, and considered their destruction not as a sacred ritual, but as a necessary "technical" operation. On this see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer*, Torino: Einaudi 1995, 27–28, and Anna-Vera Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, Torino: Einaudi 2001, 77–101, especially 85–86. As for the ideology of sacrifice (*Opfer*), it was important for the National Socialist regime, but, as is shown by J.P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People*, London: Fontana 1984, 28–34, it was believed to consist of the *Opfer* of German victims. Two meaningful texts by Adolf Hitler (respectively, a letter from the front dated February 15, 1915, and a speech dated January 30, 1936) are presented by Stern (33, 184) and testify to this.

²³ On this I quote only R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988, to which one should add Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Mediaeval Jews*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999. I have discussed the mythical system in question in Grottanelli, *Il sacrificio*, 87–88 and 127. It is attested as late as the twentieth century, and specifically in National Socialist propaganda, e.g., in Goebbels' *Der Angriff*, in 1929, in Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer*, on May 1, 1934, and in the film *Der Ewige Jude*, 1939–1940.

to speak of them (*scil.* the Jews) as aggressive vampires is to state the obvious and to mention a trait that is characteristic of their nature, even though it does not help to solve the mystery of the Jewish being.²⁴

As in the case of the blood of the martyrs cementing the wall of the Fatherland, the statements of the intellectuals about the Jew as a vampire sucking the blood of Romanians corresponded well to the words of hymns, ballads and anthems. For example in the *Marching Song of the Storoijinetz Legionaries*, we find the following verse:

See how Judas runs his claws
deep into my body,
see how my blood flows,
see how the Jews suck it!²⁵

If we envisage the Iron Guard ideology of human sacrifice as such an endless, circular sequence of vengeful violence, self-denunciation, sacrifice, and further revenge, and if we keep in mind that within that system the Jew was presented as a bloodthirsty vampire — one who was, I submit, in the original form of the accusation, an evil sacrificer of Christian victims — it becomes impossible to follow Furio Jesi. In my opinion, the correct answer to the question of the victims' identity within the Legionary ideology of sacrifice consisted precisely of the Romanian (or, in a more archaizing form, the Dacian) quality of those victims, while the arch-enemy was envisaged in ways that derive most clearly from its traditional Christian configuration as a bloody sacrificer. Together, the connection between vengeful murder and the self-surrendering of the pious assassins, on the one hand, and the Romanian identity of the heroic killers/victims, on the other, made up the Iron Guard's sacrificial system: the interpretations put forward by Jesi (1979) and by Eliade (1980) are misleading.

²⁴ Emil Cioran, *Schîmbarea la fata a României*, Bucharest 1936, 130; see Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco*, 161.

²⁵ *Guardia di Ferro*, 99–100.

4. Eliade's "Two Romanian Myths" in his *Portuguese Book*, 1943

To Mircea Eliade's shrewd biographer we owe the paradoxical observation that, as one may deduce from *Les moissons du solstice*,²⁶ Nae Ionescu's tragic death, so deeply mourned by the Romanian intellectual and by the Professor's other students, actually freed Eliade from his political obligations and made it possible for him to start a "new life" after the destruction of the Iron Guard.²⁷ In the present context this observation is a sufficient comment on the fact that Eliade was accepted as a member of the Romanian Diplomatic Service by the regime of the *Conducator* General Ion Antonescu, and that he in turn accepted to work for that regime, even after Antonescu had crushed his Iron Guard allies — with whom, on September 14, 1940, he had formed a "National Legionary State" — after their "rebellion" in January 1941. Antonescu, who had remained the sole real political authority in the country, was an ally of Nazi Germany, and in the summer of 1941 he declared war on Hitler's enemies. Eliade, who had been accepted as a Cultural Secretary in the Romanian Embassy in London on April 10, 1940, ten months before the break between Antonescu and the Iron Guard, retained his diplomatic function after the bloody conflict between the *Conducator* and the Legion. On February 10, 1941, he left London for Lisbon, where he worked for the Romanian Embassy as a Press Secretary until the downfall in 1945.²⁸

In Lisbon, Eliade became an admirer of the Salazar regime and, in the summer of 1942, he even imagined himself to have been chosen to convey a secret message from the Portuguese dictator to Antonescu.²⁹

²⁶ *Mémoire II*, 18.

²⁷ Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade*, 299–301.

²⁸ This period of Eliade's life is reconstructed by both Turcanu and Laignel-Lavastine (respectively 299–342 and 275–328), and the two reconstructions differ only in details. An important source for the years 1941–1945 is Eliade's Lisbon diary, which he never published. It is now available in an unabridged Spanish translation: Mircea Eliade, *Diario Portugués (1941–1945)*, Barcelona: Editorial Kairós 2001.

²⁹ See Cristiano Grottanelli, "Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 219 (2002) 325–56.

In order to strengthen the relationships between Portugal and Romania, he presented Salazar's regime to his countrymen by publishing a small book in Romanian on the Portuguese "counterrevolution," and, symmetrically, he wrote a short volume on Romania that was translated into Portuguese and Spanish and published in the respective capitals in 1943. An Italian translation of the Portuguese text, *Os Romenos, Latinos de Oriente*, was published in 1997 as *Breve storia della Romania e dei Rumeni*, and the Spanish edition, *Los Rumanos: Breviario historico*, was translated into English by Rodica Mihaela Scafes and published in Bucharest in 1992 under the title *The Romanians: A Concise History*. In this book, two variations on the theme of sacrificial death are described as the two most important "myths of Romanian spirituality":

In any culture there is always a central myth that is revealed and present in all its great creations. The spiritual life of the Romanians has been dominated by two myths, which express with accomplished spontaneity their spiritual vision of the universe and the existential value. The first one is the legend of *Master Manole*, who, according to the tradition, raised the superb cathedral at Curtea-de-Arges. According to the legend, everything Manole and his skilled workers built during the day would disappear during the night. In order to stand, the edifice needed to have a soul, and this could only be achieved by sacrificing a human being. When Manole and his builders understood the cause of the caducity of their work, they decided to build alive (*sic*) the first person who would approach the place where they were working. The next day, early in the morning, Manole caught glimpse of his wife who was carrying their infant in her arms and was hurrying to bring him some food. Then Manole prayed to God to start a storm so that his wife should take the back track. But the torrential rain God started listening to his prayer could not turn the foredoomed wife from her way. And so Master Manole himself was forced to build his wife and son in, in order to keep his oath and be able to build up that magnificent church, which from that moment onwards did not collapse any more.

This legend is not a creation of the Romanian people. It can be found in all the countries of Southeast Europe. Essentially, the legend is the mythical and epic formula of one (*sic*) of the most popular rituals in the world, namely the "construction rituals", which are based on the belief that, in order to last, any construction has to be "animated" through the immolation of a being, whether a human being or an animal. Nevertheless, the legend of Master Manole is, according to folklorists, the most complete, the most beautiful and the richest

in spiritual significances (*sic*). Here the folk poetic inspiration has created a masterly work that may be compared with the most beautiful creations of world folk poetry. What counts is the fact that the Romanians have chosen this mythological theme and have given it a matchless artistic and moral expression. And they have chosen it because the Romanian soul identifies itself in the myth of the supreme sacrifice which makes a work made by man's hands, whether a cathedral, a homeland or a hut, enduring. They have sung in numberless lines the sacrifice of Master Manole, because they knew that in this way they were narrating their own historical life, their permanent sacrifice. The Romanians' option for this particular legend is significant in itself. They would not have used their entire poetic genius and all spiritual resources to remake a myth if this had not revealed the reverberation the myth had in the (obviously: in *their*, C.G.) collective consciousness.³⁰

In this text, sacrifice is presented as the most typical of all Romanian cultural traits, and, even if the "epic formula of a 'constructive ritual'" is found "in all the countries of Southeast Europe" (and, I should add, often connected with the construction of famous bridges or other important monuments), and the ritual in question is "one of the most popular rituals in the world," the author states that, "according to folklorists" the Romanian version of the formula, sung in the *Ballad of Master Manole*, is "the most complete, the most beautiful and the richest in spiritual significances." In spite of the fact that, in an article he wrote in Lisbon on December 3, 1936, Ion Motza compared that sacrificial death to his own future sacrifice, Eliade's presentation of this specific, hyper-Romanian legend describes a human sacrifice that differs somewhat from the Iron Guard's sacrificial complex I have discussed so far. Not only is the Iron Guard never mentioned, but two important aspects of the Legionary theme (or, for that matter, of the play *Iphigenia*) are absent: the *war context* (the sacrifice gives "life" to a construction, in the *Master Manole* legend, a church, in other Eastern European cases, a bridge), and the *self-offering of the victims* (an unknowing wife and mother, and "an infant," who is, by definition,

³⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Romanians: A Concise History*, Bucharest: "Roza Vinturilor" 1992, 47–48.

unable to consent or to dissent). Precisely these two elements, conflict and consent, are present, however, in the other “myth of Romanian spirituality” described by Eliade in his 1943 booklet:

But even more than in the legend of Master Manole, the Romanians identify themselves in a splendid folk poem called *Mioritza* (*The Ewe Lamb*), that can be found everywhere in numberless variants. It is called a “folk poem,” but, as happens with all great creations of the genius of a people, it takes affinity with religion, morals and metaphysics. It is the simple and sincere story of a shepherd who, though warned by an ewe lamb against the imminent danger of being killed by two of his companions, who were envying him for his sheep, does not run away but accepts death. This serene attitude in front of death, this way of seeing death as a mystical marriage to the Whole has acquired matchless accents in *Mioritza* (*sic*). We are faced with an original vision of life and death — the latter being seen as a bride promised to the entire world — that is expressed in an excellent lyrical form rather than philosophical terms.³¹

The second myth in Eliade’s pair is discussed briefly as follows:

Mioritza is one of the folk creations that helps one best to understand the attitude of the Romanian soul in front of death. . . . Death is not a diminution of the human being; on the contrary, it is an increase, from the metaphysical point of view, of course. Man should not run away from death and even less so (*sic*) should he lament upon its arrival; death is a fact of cosmic size that has to be accepted with equanimity and even with joy, because due to it the individual frees himself from his limits. This is not a lyrical species of pantheism, although nature

³¹ Ibid. 48. As for Motza’s use of the *Master Manole* theme, see Paola Pisi, “I ‘tradizionalisti’ e la formazione del pensiero di Eliade,” in Luciano Arcella, Paola Pisi and Roberto Scagno (eds.), *Confronto con Mircea Eliade: Archetipi mitici e identità storica*, Milano: Jaca Book 1998, 43–133, at 113–115 n. 130. I find the passage in question in the Italian translation of some of Motza’s letters and other writings, printed by a publishing house of the extreme right: *Testamento di Ion Motza: Il tributo di sangue della Guardia di Ferro di Romania nella lotta contro il bolscevismo in Spagna*, Parma: Edizioni all’insegna del veltro 1984, 42–43. The passage is the following: “Our action is a corner-stone of this new Romanian Legionary building, of a building that — following a destiny which has been thus since the time of the legend of Master Manole — has demanded that we be buried in the foundations, so that centuries shall not demolish it.” This booklet is presented as a reprint of a previous edition, 1937.

participates in this act of reintegration, because nature is not identified with God, but is seen as a creation of God. Through death the soul is reintegrated in the big (*sic*) cosmic family, which is, as a whole, the work of the Creator.³²

Though this second Romanian tradition contains what the first one lacks, so that the two together form a couple that may be compared to the Iron Guard's sacrificial ideology (but without any reference to the Iron Guard itself!), it is not possible to dwell on it here. The theme of *reintegration* we have seen quoted in *Os Romenos, Latinos de Oriente* to explain the meaning of *Mioritza* was central in another book by Eliade, *Mitul Reintegrării*, prepared in Bucharest in June 1942 — about a year before the small volume on Romania appeared in Lisbon and in Madrid, and slightly more than a year after Mihail Sebastian saw *Iphigenia*. The best answer to that treatment of the touching story of the Ewe Lamb, however, was published much later, as Georges Dumézil's contribution to the *Cahier de l'Herne* dedicated in 1976 to Mircea Eliade, bearing the title *Le message avant la mort*.³³

More should be said of the *Master Manole* legend, which was the object of Eliade's volume *Comentarii la legenda Mesterului Manole*, Bucharest 1943. In the preface to that book the author explains that its contents had been part of a course he had given at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest during the academic year 1936–1937, as a substitute teacher for the Chair of Metaphysics held by Professor Nae Ionescu. Eliade's work on the spiritual meaning of the mythical sacrifice of Manole's wife was published in Bucharest while he was in Lisbon and shortly after Stalingrad, but it dated back to the time when he was a faithful collaborator of Nae Ionescu who wrote enthusiastic articles extolling the sacrifice of Motza and Marin.³⁴

As for the meaning of the two Romanian myths taken together, the

³² Ibid. 48–49.

³³ Georges Dumézil, *Le message avant la mort*, in Constantin Tacu (ed.), *L'Herne. Mircea Eliade*, Éditions de l'Herne, Paris 1978, pp. 88–91.

³⁴ On this aspect of the *Comentarii*, see my article “Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942,” 349–56. In examining the *Comentarii* and *Mitul Reintegrării*, I have availed myself of two excellent Italian editions of those books: Mircea Eliade,

Press Secretary of the Lisbon Embassy presented it thus in the concluding lines of the paragraph he had called *The Two Myths of Romanian Spirituality*:

A culture, like an individual, is revealed to us not only through the way it approaches life, but also through its attitude towards death. The value attributed to death has considerable importance for the understanding of a culture or an individual. [. . .] This vision of death (*scil.*, the vision we find in the “Two Myths of Romanian Spirituality”) is enhanced and rounded off by many other Romanian folk creations. The same conception is present in the poems of Mihail Eminescu, one of the greatest writers of the 19th century. It is also present in the entire folklore of the Romanian people, as well as in its funeral rites. It is perhaps a conception inherited from its Geto-Dacian ancestors, or perhaps an original approach of Christianity which, let us not forget, has attributed a positive value to death. Fact is that the Romanians attribute to death a significance in harmony with their Christian conception about existence (*sic*), which, as we have seen, is based in the belief in a cosmic order established by God and the conviction that, throughout centuries, good will triumph over evil.

These two myths — that of *Master Manole* and that of *Mioritza* — are the more so interesting as (*sic*), generally, the Romanians cannot be considered as “mystical.” They are a religious people, but also a humane, vigorous and optimistic people that rejects the frenzy and exaltation implied by the idea of “mysticism.” Common sense is a dominant form of its spiritual life.³⁵

Before I conclude this part of my article, I wish to comment briefly upon the fact that, in his Portuguese and Spanish book from 1943, Eliade qualified the Romanian view of death and sacrifice as a view typical of an entire national community, and as the attitude of a people he described as “not mystical.” These are meaningful qualifications, and allow us, I think, to understand an important aspect of the Romanian intellectual’s position. To Paola Pisi we owe an original and useful contribution on the relationship between Eliade and the “traditionalists” (René Guénon, Julius Evola, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy), especially

I riti del costruire, Milano: Jaca Book 1989, translated and with an introduction by Roberto Scagno, and *Il mito della reintegrazione*, Milano: Jaca Book 1989.

³⁵ Eliade, *The Romanians*, 49.

between 1932 and 1945.³⁶ In that essay, the relationship between Eliade and Coomaraswamy is stressed, and Pisi goes as far as to state that “the central part of *Mitul Reintegrării* (1942) is nothing but an abridgement and a popularization, but also a trivialization” of Coomaraswamy’s article “Angel and Titan” published in 1935. In particular, Pisi holds that Eliade trivialized Coomaraswamy’s complex metaphysical view of sacrifice as reintegration (based mainly, but not only, upon Vedic texts), presented in that article and in other writings, by substituting a simpler, psychological reading to his colleague’s ontological (and “mystical”) interpretation. In my opinion, Eliade’s simplification of Coomaraswamy’s metaphysical discourse is the result not of a misunderstanding, but of a deliberate choice, dictated by the Romanian intellectual’s desire to combine his colleague’s sophisticated position with the popular — and political — ideology of sacrifice he had known, and contributed to, during his experience with the Iron Guard. This same intention explains why Eliade transformed Coomaraswamy’s theory of *sacrificial reintegration* in Vedic India into the elementary idea of *creation by sacrifice* that he attributed to ancient Indian religiosity and presented as the combination of a mythical cosmogony by sacrifice with the supposed cosmogonical quality of every sacrificial rite. In this idea, I submit, one can easily recognize the conception of “fruitful sacrifice” he had referred to most emphatically in his *Vremea* article on the heroic death of Ion Motza, published on January 24, 1937.

5. Ernst Jünger, *Peace, and Sacrifice*

In the first volume of his *Fragments d’un journal*, published in 1976 and covering the years 1945–1969, Eliade mentions Ernst Jünger three times.³⁷ In the entry dated February 8, 1953, dedicated to Paule Régnier’s *Journal*, he writes that Gide, Jünger “and the others” write

³⁶ Paola Pisi, “I ‘tradizionalisti’ e la formazione del pensiero di Eliade” (above, n. 31), in particular 53–60.

³⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Fragments d’un journal*, Paris: Gallimard 1973.

their diaries (in Jünger's case, his diaries came out between 1949 and 1955) so that they may one day be published, and thus as books full of "messages." On June 7, 1959, he describes his meeting with Jünger and the Editorial Secretary of *Antaios*, Philippe Wolf, to prepare the second issue of that periodical, co-founded by Eliade and by Jünger in 1957, and (at least officially) co-directed by them from its first issue (1959) to its twelfth and last, dated 1971. On that occasion, he adds, Jünger offered him *Jahre der Okkupation*, the second volume of his diary from the years 1941–1945, when he was a Wehrmacht officer in Paris, on the war front in Caucasus, and elsewhere. On August 2, 1964, discussing the small article he has just begun to prepare for the 1965 issue of *Antaios*, and which he dedicated to Jünger's diaries, *Strahlungen*, he expresses his admiration of the German writer's style, so well exemplified by that text, where short notes taken down during the day, and expanded upon during the night or on the following day, were soon later transformed to shape a more complex, but still laconic and "essential" discourse.

Eliade's interest in Jünger's *Strahlungen*, to which he refers in each of the three passages in his own *Fragments d'un journal* where he mentions the German writer, is striking. The idea that such a text was constructed gradually, by developing notes jotted down during the intellectual's daily activity so as to construct a rich discourse made up of "messages," was important for the Romanian author, who may well have seen Jünger's publication as a model for his own. Surely, the other aspect of Jünger's *Strahlungen*, that of being an apologetic reconstruction of the author's activities and attitudes during the war years (as Carl Schmitt realized immediately, calling it a *Selbstdarstellung*),³⁸ was also important for Eliade, who used his own *Fragments*

³⁸ Carl Schmitt, *Glossarium: Aufzeichnungen der Jahre 1947–1951*, Berlin: Duncker und Humblot 1991, 99, 129–40, 173–74; see p. 130: "après nous le démontage." An explicit comparison between Schmitt's writings from the years immediately after the Second World War (see the title of his book *Ex Captivitate Salus*, 1950) and Jünger's *Strahlungen* is found on pp. 173–74: "Mein Bruder findet die Captiva Captivitatis

d'un journal to present himself in a favourable light and to erase the memory of his own youthful political errors.

All this is important in order to understand the respective ideological stances of the two intellectuals, who met only during the fifties but had some knowledge of each other's personality and writings already in 1942, through their common friend Carl Schmitt.³⁹ But, in the present context, it is much more meaningful to explore Jünger's treatment of the theme "sacrifice" both in his war diary (as presented in *Strahlungen*, 1949, and in the later volumes and editions published under the same title) and in a small book he allegedly wrote during the Second World War. Jünger's use of the concept was original, and may be compared to the sense given to it by Eliade, both in the Romanian political arena and in wider contexts.

The German writer's treatment of the sacrificial theme in his published diaries is well exemplified by an entry dated April 17, 1945. Discussing the Book of Esther and the millennial destiny of the Jews, he wrote: "It is impossible that such sacrifices (or: such victims) should not give fruits" (*Es ist unmöglich, dass solche Opfer nicht Frucht tragen*).⁴⁰ But fruitful sacrifices are also mentioned in entries dated earlier. For example, under the entry dated August 6, 1943, we find:

The seed from which this war shall draw its fruits is sacrifice (*das Korn, aus dem der Krieg Frucht tragen wird, ist das Opfer*). Next to the sacrifice of the

viel besser und lesenswerter als E. Jünger's 'Strahlungen', weil Jünger eben nicht in Gefangenschaft war. Der *Pour le mérite* hat seine neuen Formen und Kierkegaard hat das alles schon 1848 genug ausgesprochen" (the entry is dated June 29, 1948).

³⁹ On this, see my article "Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942" (n. 29), esp. 328–29. As for the relationship between Eliade and Jünger, a correspondence between the two exists: Jünger's letters to Eliade, in French and in German, are kept in the Regenstein Library Archive in Chicago, while Eliade's letters to Jünger, in French, are kept in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar. I thank Florin Turcanu for providing this information (personal communication, October 11, 2004), and I hope to receive a copy of his article in Romanian on this correspondence.

⁴⁰ Ernst Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1995, 415–16 (in the section called *Die Hütte im Weinberg. Jahre der Okkupation*).

soldier, or of the worker (*der Arbeiter*), I must not forget the sacrifice of those innocents who have been slaughtered in a bloodthirsty way and without any reason. The construction of the new world shall be based especially upon them, as it was the case in the past with children walled into bridges.⁴¹

The similarity between Jünger's sacrificial discourse and Eliade's seems rather precise, because to the wide-spread theme of sacrifice bearing fruit, which is common to both authors, we should add a further and more specific theme also mentioned both by the Romanian official and by the German officer: that of the sacrifice of children in order to give life to buildings and allow them to endure. In spite of the similarity, however, it seems hard to reconstruct a historical connection between the respective references to this theme by the two writers: as I have stated above, Eliade published his Romanian volume on Master Manole in 1943, the same year to which Jünger's *Strahlungen* entry refers, but the war, and especially the language, were obvious obstacles for that learned book's diffusion and impact. A shortened French version of that text was available only in 1957, as an article in the periodical *Études Roumaines*.

In the entry dated August 6, 1943, quoted above, Jünger presents the sacrificial theme as a part of the third chapter of a pamphlet he was allegedly planning to write, and to which *Strahlungen* refers rather frequently. That pamphlet (in *Strahlungen*, the author calls it an *Aufruf*, i.e., an "Appeal") is a famous problem in the bibliography of the German "conservative revolutionary." Its title was *Der Friede (Peace)*; and, according to what Jünger stated in the 1980 edition,⁴² he started working on it in 1941, circulated it illegally during 1944, and published it in 1945. Its contents reflected the Wehrmacht officer's and

⁴¹ Ibid. 114–16 (in the section called *Das zweite Pariser Tagebuch*).

⁴² *Der Friede* is now available as the fourth essay in Ernst Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke, Zweite Abteilung: Essays*, vol. 7, *Essays I*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 1980, 195–236. It is dedicated to "Meinem lieben Sohn Ernst Jünger. Geboren 1.5.1926. Gefallen 29.11.1944 bei Carrara." More information on *Der Friede* can be found in Horst Mühleisen, *Bibliographie der Werke Ernst Jüngers, Begründet von Hans-Peter Des Coudres*, Stuttgart: Cotta 1995, 39–41. The complete title of the 1945 edition was: *Der Friede. Ein Wort an die Jugend Europas und an die Jugend der Welt*.

First World War hero's alleged *metanoia*: Jünger's version is that he was horrified by Hitler and that the peace he wished for should be reached "without further violence." That peace should be "consecrated to the future," and "won by all" (that is to say, it should be a peace without winners, and obviously without defeat). According to the generally accepted version of the events of 1944, the circulation of *Der Friede* caused problems for Jünger within the Wehrmacht, and in *Strahlungen* (e.g., in the entries dated March 27, and July 21–24, 1944) the German writer describes himself as a friend and admirer of some of the conspirators who attempted to kill Hitler on July 20.⁴³

Jünger's *Friede* was presented as based upon the fruitful sacrifice of all the war victims, and especially of the "innocent" victims, among them the Jews, often mentioned, and precisely as victims, in that author's published diaries, but never explicitly referred to in the *Aufruf*. In *Strahlungen*, already under the date September 19, 1943, we read that the first part of the *Aufruf* that would become *Der Friede* bore the title *Das Opfer*, and that its contents could be expressed by Thesis 44 of Spinoza's *Ethics*: "The hate that is totally defeated by love becomes love; and the resulting love is stronger than it could ever be if it had not originally been hate." This interpretation of the relationship between sacrifice and peace is based upon the idea that sacrifice is the price of peace, and that peace is ransomed, or rather redeemed, by sacrifice. By implication, the wilful self-offering of victims surrendering their lives to gain victory for their own side is valuable only insofar as their death is held to be an unwilling tribute to peace, and, as Jünger explicitly states in the August 5, 1943, entry in *Strahlungen*, quoted above, the greatest value is actually attributed to the sacrifice of unknowing innocents.

If we compare Jünger's sacrificial discourse in *Strahlungen* and in *Der Friede* to Eliade's writings on sacrifice between 1937 and 1943, we are confronted with two different treatments of the two themes I have attempted to identify in the Romanian intellectual's production: the *war context* and the *self-offering of the victim*. In Eliade's *Iphigenia*,

⁴³ Jünger, *Strahlungen II*, 284–92 (the entries dated from July 20 to August 1, 1944).

just as in his articles on the sacrifice of the Iron Guard, both themes were central. In the book he published in Lisbon and Madrid in 1943, one of the two “myths of Romanian spirituality” (*Mioritza*) contained both themes, conflict and the will to perish, while the other, the *Legend of Master Manole*, featured neither, but insisted on the sacrifice of an innocent baby to “give life” to a church. Jünger’s discourse in the texts I am discussing here combined the *war* theme with sacrifice, while attributing great value to specific cases in which *wilful self-offering is absent*, and comparing the most valuable sacrifices to the death of “children walled into bridges.” This paradoxical combination, recently discussed by Marcus Paul Bullock,⁴⁴ was dictated by the more general paradox of *peace* founded upon, and liberated by, *the death of war victims*, or, in other words, of sacrifice for victory replaced by — and in some cases “used” by — sacrifice for a peace without victory and without defeat.

The sacrificial discourse we find in *Strahlungen* and in *Der Friede* differs greatly not only from Eliade’s, but also from Jünger’s own discourse in his previous writings, mostly based upon the rhetoric of heroism and hardship in the trenches of the Great War.⁴⁵ Very clearly,

⁴⁴ Marcus Paul Bullock, *The Violent Eye: Ernst Jünger’s Visions and Revisions on the European Right*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1992, 158–59, notices the contradictions in the list of victims we find in *Der Friede*, and in particular the survival of the term *Arbeiter*, a key word of Jünger’s pre-war production and the title of his book of 1932. Bullock comments upon “the split we can see in the way in which he (Jünger) uses the term *Arbeiter* towards the end of the war. On the Caucasian front, he ascribed all the abuse of human lives and human bodies the conflict has produced to the fact that the struggle was between *Arbeiter* on both sides. Yet in the published version of *Der Friede*, composed later, when events had imposed this view yet more forcibly, he continued to give a positive, constructive role to elements described with the same term. The contradiction is to be sought less in what he found through his observations of the world than in his attitude toward himself and his own positions. The fascination exerted by this term that he devised and identified now clearly generates a major stumbling block to the advance of his own understanding.”

⁴⁵ On Jünger’s war discourse, Bullock’s discussion should be supplemented with Ferruccio Masini, “La guerra come *nomos* della catastrofe in Ernst Jünger,” in Ferruccio Masini (ed.), *Ideologia della guerra*, Naples: Bibliopolis 1987, 60–76.

this original treatment of sacrificial death as a way to redemption and *as a guarantee for a peace without victory*, with the connected “mixture” of fighting victims and innocent victims, is totally new. On the other hand, though Jünger’s musings on the First World War were rightly famous classical examples of male bellicosity, his view of the relationship between the intentions and values of the brave fighters he praised and the scope and meaning of the conflict they were engaged in justifies the usual definition of the German writer’s first production as a *heroic nihilism*. This view is best expressed in this passage of *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 1922, in which the young Lieutenant Ernst Jünger, in charge of a platoon of storm troopers, describes the men under his command, as they engage in “endless discussions about the war”:

They will never find the solution, for even the way they put their questions is wrong. They take the war to be, not an expression but a cause, and in this way they are hoping to find outside what is only to be found within. However, one must understand them. They are materialists through and through, and I, who have lived among them for years, hear this in every word they say. They are really material, the material which, without their knowing it, the Idea is consuming in order to reach its great aims.⁴⁶

These brave soldiers, who know nothing of the real meaning of the murderous battles they are fighting, and are described as matter consumed by the Idea, are clearly a premonition not only of *der Soldat*, *der Arbeiter*, killed in the Second World War, but also, and in a way even more clearly, of the victims Jünger listed after them in the *Strahlungen* entry dated August 6, 1943, the *unschuldig Leidenden* who were slaughtered without any reason, compared by the German author to children walled into bridges (*eingemauerten Kindern*). Only the function of such victims (the soldiers, the workmen, and the unknowing innocents) is new: peace is now the “fruit” (*Frucht*) of the sacrifice (*Opfer*).

⁴⁶ Quoted in J.P. Stern, *Hitler* (above, n. 22), 183.

6. *Fruitful Death: Eliade, Jünger and Maybaum*

The transformation attested by *Strahlungen* and by *Der Friede* is thus a meaningful change in Jünger's discourse. It is not important here to discuss the nature of that change; it may even be correct to state that, as Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno once wrote to Thomas Mann, Jünger started out as a second-rate kitsch writer and later became a second-hand Stephan George, decked in bronze foliage.⁴⁷ In the present context, it is more important to compare Jünger's paradoxical use of the theme of human sacrifice to Eliade's more traditional positions in his play *Iphigenia*, and to the Romanian's discussion of the *Master Manole* ballad and the *Mioritza* tradition.

The comparison could well take the form of answers to three questions, some of which have already been asked in different ways in previous parts of this article. First of all, we should ask: whose blood is shed in sacrifice in the various texts? Second: is the sacrifice in question a self-offering? And, third, what is the "fruit" of the sacrifice? As for Eliade's treatment of the theme, it is easy to answer all questions: in the play *Iphigenia* it is the daughter of the king who is sacrificed, so that the Achaean army can go to war, and, in the two Romanian myths, Eliade insists in his Portuguese book of 1943, Romanian blood is shed; in the play, the heroine accepts, indeed, desires, her own sacrificial death, in the *Mioritza* tradition, the pastoral hero "does not run away, but accepts death" and even describes it to his mother as a wedding, while the baby sacrificed in the *Master Manole* may not be consulted; as for the "fruit," it is victory in *Iphigenia* (or rather the condition for victory, the possibility of waging war), in *Mioritza* the sacral overcoming of death, and in *Master Manole* the stability of a sacred building. As for Jünger's sacrificial discourse in *Strahlungen* and in *Der Friede*, the blood that "gives fruit" is the blood of "soldiers and workers" on both sides, and the

⁴⁷ Christof Götde and Thomas Sprecher (eds.), *Theodor W. Adorno, Thomas Mann, Briefwechsel 1943–1955*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2002, 47–49.

blood of innocent victims killed “without any reason”; symmetrically, some of the victims are willing, though they offer themselves for values that are not the peace Jünger aspires to, and others are unknowing; and finally, peace without victory is the “fruit” born from that blood. In different ways, Eliade and Jünger offer a rich sacrificial discourse, that is worthy of the age of havoc and terror Europe was going through while they produced it.

Elsewhere, I have gone as far as to present Jünger as a paradoxical forerunner of that specific variety of the Holocaust theme that is most faithful to the sacrificial meaning of the term.⁴⁸ Here, more modestly, I wish to draw the reader’s attention both to the resemblance and to the difference between the German intellectual’s discussion of the redemptive value of the death of the Second World War victims, and specifically of the Jewish victims, and the idea of the *Shoah* as a vicarious and expiatory sacrifice. According to Anna-Vera Sullam Calimani, the first use of the term *Holocaust* to indicate the destruction of the Jews by the National Socialist regime goes back to 1942. If the dates given by the German writer to his pamphlet *Der Friede* are correct, he started preparing it one year before the term was first used in that sense, and circulated it illegally three years later. It would appear that, shortly after the present use of the term *Holocaust* first appeared, but four years before the war ended, and surely some time before he acquired complete information about the regime’s crimes, Ernst Jünger suggested a sacrificial reading of the war massacres, including, or, rather, implicitly giving pride of place, to the mass killing of Jews.

A direct comparison between Jünger’s reading of the Second World War massacre of the European Jews and the reflections of Rabbi Ignaz Maybaum is particularly suggestive. In his book *The Face of God after Auschwitz*, Maybaum wrote:

⁴⁸ Grottanelli, *Il sacrificio*, 104–7. On the sacrificial quality of the term *Holocaust* see now especially Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio* (above, n. 22), 77–112.

We live now in the post-Auschwitz era and look back to the *ante* Auschwitz era. It was, what Amos calls, 'The day of the Lord', which created the division into a condemned past and into a new era. . . . The six million who died innocently, died because no man is an island, because everyone is responsible for everyone else. The innocent who died in Auschwitz, not for the sake of their own sins, but because of the sins of others, atone for evil and are the sacrifice which is brought to the altar and which God acknowledges favourably. The six million, the dead of Auschwitz and of other places of horror, are Jews whom our modern civilization has to canonize as holy martyrs; they died as sacrificial lambs because of the sins inherent in Western civilization. Their death purified Western civilization so that it can again become a place where man can live, do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.⁴⁹

Though many essential traits of the sacrificial discourse of Jünger and Maybaum are similar, the differences are just as striking, and in particular one notes immediately that Maybaum's language is more specifically religious: purification, atonement, canonization, holy martyrs, sacrificial lambs, God's favourable acknowledgement of the sacrifice, walking humbly with God, are all more or less technical terms or expressions of the specific *techne* this journal specializes in, and in particular of the Judeo-Christian species of such a *techne*. Indeed, as some Jewish critics of Maybaum's theories have suggested, some of these concepts are interpreted and used in a way that is more Christian than Jewish.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God after Auschwitz*, Amsterdam: Polack and Van Gennep 1965, 83–84.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought*, New York: New York University Press 1983, 252–53. This criticism is indirectly strengthened by the contents of a famous Catholic view of the Holocaust: François Mauriac, "Un enfant juif," *Le Figaro Littéraire*, July 7, 1958, p. 1, and Idem, "Préface," to Elie Wiesel, *La nuit*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1958. In an interview published in 1985, Elie Wiesel stated that in Mauriac's article, which described his first meeting with Wiesel and later became a preface to his French book, "there are some Christological overtones . . . which I don't like." On Mauriac and the *Shoah*, see Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, 81–82 and 91.

Secondly, while Jünger's point is precisely that, although the innocent victims are the most fruitful, *all* victims of the Second World War are fruitful victims, Maybaum insists upon the innocence and the Jewish quality of the victims. Both describe the general value and the wide beneficial consequences of the sacrifice: its fruit is peace without a winning side for Jünger, and the purification of the Western civilization for Maybaum.

The comparison between Maybaum's and Jünger's positions encourages me to put Carl Schmitt's, Marcus Paul Bullock's, and my own, suspicious reading of *Strahlungen* aside for a moment, and to go back to my comparison between the sacrificial ideologies of Eliade and Jünger with a new, and concluding, question. Could we envisage the German writer's sacrificial discourse, whatever its intention and context, as a theoretical mediation, and as a typological transition, between Eliade's nationalistic positions and the broader dimension of the reflection on the *Shoah*?

In my opinion, there are several reasons for giving a negative answer to this question. I shall thus conclude by mentioning only two such reasons. The first is the *cosmic* quality of sacrifice in Eliade's writings, a quality that was always important, but became even more so after the war, and gradually — but never totally — “covered” the nationalistic aspects of his discourse. The second is the presence of *sacrificial*, or at least of *sacral*, dimensions in that Israeli discourse on the *Shoah* that was well defined by Saul Friedländer in his article *Die Shoah als Element in der Konstruktion israelischer Erinnerung* (1987).⁵¹ Of such dimensions I quote one trace, that appears in the

⁵¹ Saul Friedländer, “Die Shoah als Element in der Konstruktion israelischer Erinnerung,” *Babylon* 2 (1987) 4–16. On this type of *Shoah* memory, see David Bidussa, “Introduzione,” in David Bidussa (ed.), *Ebrei moderni: Identità e stereotipi culturali*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri 1989, 20–23; Dalia Ofer, “Linguistic Conceptualization of the Holocaust in Palestine and Israel 1942–1953,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31 (1996) 567–95; and Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, 91–94.

statement by the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer, who wrote in 1978: “Holocaust was the policy of the total, *sacral* Nazi act of mass murder of all the Jews they could lay hands on.”⁵² The italics are mine.⁵³

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⁵² Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, Seattle: University of Washington Press 1978, 36.

⁵³ I thank Florin Turcanu, who read and corrected this article (November 2004).